

San Diego Water Board Practical Vision

A Vision for Achieving A Supported, Empowered, Energized Community

In order to succeed in fulfilling the mission of the San Diego Water Board, we must establish a healthy organizational culture that fosters integrity, high morale, productivity, strong leadership, commitment, growth, and employee retention. The Supported, Empowered, and Energized Community (SEEC) Practical Vision provides stepping stones for the development of this type of culture. A healthy organizational culture can be described as follows:

- A group of engaged, dedicated professionals;
- Appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of employees;
- Clear communication of employee expectations and goals;
- Leadership with a strong sense of purpose and direction;
- Investment in the professional development of employees;
- Taking a community or holistic approach to problems;
- Employees who are proud and enthusiastic about the Mission of the San Diego Water Board.

This type of organizational culture promotes increased employee involvement, effective communication at all levels, recognition of the relevancy of our work, and allows for a holistic approach to maintaining and restoring water quality within the San Diego Region.

Practical Vision Statement

Maintain a healthy organizational culture that promotes a productive, harmonious work environment founded on integrity, communication, and leadership.

Mission Statement

We will develop the foundation for an organizational culture that supports staff with clear and open communication, empowers staff through mutual respect, appreciation of effort, and strong leadership, and creates an energized community environment of professionals dedicated to the mission of the San Diego Water Board.

The Values of this Practical Vision

Values are the foundation upon which any organizational culture is built, and therefore it is important to have a firm understanding of what those values are and their role within the organization. The organizational culture we intend to develop for the San Diego Water Board is dependent upon numerous values, including integrity, communication, and strong leadership.

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Integrity is the knowledge that we as individuals are dedicated to our mission, that we can depend and rely upon one another, and that we take responsibility for our actions. Integrity also means doing the right thing and making difficult choices in the face of adversity.

Clear, open communication that allows for and encourages discussion and the exchange of ideas among staff and management is essential to consistency and transparency. A workplace culture that values the input of every employee is a healthy one.

Strong leadership is based on mutual respect, open communication, and the ability to motivate employees during difficult times. Effective leaders encourage others to think outside the box, to be resourceful (i.e., to do more with less), to put forth their best effort, engage others, and inspire them to meet their full professional potential.

Where We Are in 2013

The organizational culture at the San Diego Water Board has and continues to be strongly influenced by external factors such as the economic climate, politics, and public sentiment towards government workers. Our culture also often favors a “top-down” approach to problem solving and communication. When external factors infiltrate our daily work environment, creativity is stifled, morale is low, apathy is high, and employees begin looking for work outside the agency.

Throughout the past year, employees have participated in the development of a Practical Vision for the San Diego Water Board, redefining who we are as an agency, as well as our priorities and goals for water quality within the San Diego Region. The direction our agency is now taking as well as our expanding workload and the increasing complexity of the projects we regulate mandates that our organizational culture change to reflect these new challenges, goals, and aspirations. This is supported by our Board and a new management team that embraces a balanced administration style, incorporating both the top-down and bottom-up approach to problem solving, personnel oversight, and project management. By focusing on internal factors such as employee morale and well-being, producing quality work, clear and open communication, and well-defined goals and expectations, we will better equip ourselves to manage the external factors that impact and influence decisions. Empowering employees to manage and cope with stress inducers that are beyond our control in turn allows us to maintain a healthy organizational culture.

Why This Practical Vision Is A Priority

Building a healthy organizational culture is beneficial to employees, the Mission of the San Diego Water Board, and to the public we serve. Simply stated, a happy employee is an engaged employee. Engaged employees in turn contribute to a healthy organizational culture, and vice versa. Employees who know their work is relevant to an overall mission or goal, and who are respected and valued for their knowledge, expertise, and efforts, are more likely to find job satisfaction. Further, employees who

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find their jobs satisfying and fulfilling, are more likely to produce high quality work, and see their job as a career rather than just a paycheck.

An organization comprised of fulfilled, engaged employees benefits through increased productivity, improved morale, and retention of quality employees. An organizational culture that promotes job satisfaction among its employees is rooted in strong leadership and open communication. In turn, the organization is more effective at interacting with and serving the public.

Government agencies are often seen as bureaucratic entities, filled with red tape and apathetic employees, despite the services they provide and quality of work produced. The implementation of the organizational culture proposed through this practical vision will foster a positive public opinion, revising the perception of “*good enough for government work*” from a lazy effort that lacks quality to exceptional service and high quality information and deliverables.

Projects for Practical Vision Success

There are a number of actions our agency can take to cultivate a healthy organizational culture where employees feel they provide critical contributions to the agency’s success and are valued as individuals. The following outlines a series of projects and tasks that promote the values of the SEEC’s Practical Vision.

1. Employee Expectations and Measurements

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project is the annual completion of performance evaluations and Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for all staff and supervisors. Performance evaluations allow supervisors to provide constructive feedback, acknowledge superior accomplishments from the previous year, identify shortcomings, and can be used as a mechanism for accountability for those staff who struggle to meet expectations. Performance evaluations also provide staff with an opportunity to provide a supervisor feedback regarding their management of the unit or program, specifically concerning scheduling, expectations, and project assignments. Performance evaluations may also be considered when assessing unit coverage needs and the potential for schedule realignment and flexibility for staff.

IDPs serve as a tool for supervisors and management to use to assist employees in strengthening areas of weakness in their professional lives, cultivating opportunities for professional growth and development, and maintaining a level of understanding and knowledge of new technologies and methodologies regarding our work. IDPs may also be used as a means of identifying job specific skills that should be nurtured (i.e., areas of expertise), and shared with other staff through peer mentoring (see Project No. 3), and to document an employee’s desire to cross-train in other program areas within the agency.

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Employee expectations provide clear documentation of what is deemed appropriate professional conduct, the anticipated level of responsibility, commitment, and involvement in projects, and personal growth and development. Employee expectations can be revisited throughout the year if an employee consistently achieves their goals more quickly than anticipated, or if the employee is struggling to meet their supervisor's expectations.

b. Project Goals

- i. Performance evaluations, IDPs, and employee expectations will be completed for all staff and supervisors on an annual basis;
- ii. Performance evaluations will be used to evaluate the fulfillment of expectations and the completion of tasks identified in IDPs;
- iii. IDPs will be used to identify needed training or other career developmental tools necessary for future employee success; and
- iv. Employee expectations will be used to clearly convey what is required of the employee in terms of conduct, responsibilities, and involvement in projects and professional development.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Provide staff with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and supervisor's expectations;
- ii. Provides documentation to support incentives, staff assignments, and/or needed training;
- iii. Update the performance evaluation forms, as needed, to reflect current staffing, projects, expectations, and responsibilities; and
- v. Provide staff with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and supervisor's expectations.

d. Underlying Contradictions

Supervisors can provide constructive criticism to staff about areas of performance in which they have met or exceeded expectations, areas in which they can provide guidance to other staff, and areas in which they may need guidance.

IDPs provide a mechanism for staff to express their desire to learn about new technologies within their field, opportunities for upcoming training, and other areas of personal employee development. IDPs provide supervisors a tool for identifying needed training, inter-program cross-training opportunities, and potential employee development. The IDPs are based on performance reviews, advice received from supervisors or mentors within our agency, and includes a statement or list of employee expectations.

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The underlying contradictions for this project are as follows:

- i. Completing performance evaluations can be a time consuming process;
- ii. In the past, performance evaluations have been underutilized, and staff have found them to be ineffective or not useful;
- iii. Supervisors may need to have difficult conversations with staff who are underperforming and have not met management's expectations;
- iv. Insufficient funding for training;
- v. Supervisors may be reluctant to enforce performance expectations if an employee is well-liked, but underperforming; or
- vi. Lack of time to attend training, or the unavailability of the right type of training.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

Annual performance evaluations increase communication between staff and supervisors, and supervisors and management. Performance evaluations both support and empower staff by providing feedback, acknowledgement, accountability, and the opportunity for growth. Creation and routine review of IDPs give employees the opportunity to influence their career path and professional development. IDPs are also a useful tool for supervisors to provide staff with expectations, motivate staff to strive for upward mobility, and support staff in their professional growth. Employees benefit from having clear expectations.

f. Schedule/Milestones

- i. Performance Evaluations will be completed by June 30th of each year.
- ii. IDPs will be completed by September 30th of each year.

g. Resources Needed

The amount of time needed for this task is dependent upon the staff person receiving the Performance Evaluation or IDP. Because Evaluations and IDP are dynamic documents, the initial time expenditure is expected to be greater than the time needed to update this information in subsequent years.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

The completion of some projects may be delayed if staff are required to complete training within a specific timeframe. Otherwise, it is not anticipated that other tasks would be delayed in order to implement this project.

2. Improved Communication

a. Project Description or Purpose

Communication is the key to the survival and success of any relationship. Clear communication between management and staff is essential to promoting a healthy office culture. Staff who are well informed and have the tools and resources needed to perform their jobs feel supported, are engaged within the office community, are empowered to work independently, and will take initiative to move projects forward.

Strong internal communication is also essential to carrying out the mission of the San Diego Water Board. When we are ineffective in our internal communication, we are often ineffective in communicating with our stakeholders as well. A good internal communication system makes challenges easier to discuss, disagreements less personal, and relieves tension when dealing with contentious projects or issues. This promotes a positive form of interaction, allowing the lines of communication to remain open, rather than shutting down because emotions are running high. Practicing positive, clear communication skills internally will make us better prepared to communicate our needs and requirements with our stakeholders.

This project proposes several tools to use in developing positive communication styles. First, holding effective meetings where the goal of the meeting is clearly stated ahead of time allows participants to anticipate the expected level of involvement and provides time to prepare for the discussion. Second, providing opportunities for staff to offer input regarding both projects and personnel issues empowers staff to be part of the decision making process. Third is to develop communication forums that allow for open discussions among management and staff of important projects and issues.

Finally, strong internal communication will lead to consistency in our decision making processes, our approach to managing projects, and our interaction with stakeholders.

b. Project Goals

- i. Develop protocols and guidelines for holding technical and informational meetings, as well as standards, and tools to maximize the effectiveness of meetings, workshops, and technical sessions.
- ii. Develop a Supervisor Survey for staff to provide feedback regarding their supervisors and branch chiefs; encourage more unit / branch meetings to discuss complex or contentious projects or issues that staff have a vested interest in.
- iii. Establish internal communication forums (for example, All Hands meetings and branch meetings) to inform staff of personnel and technical policy changes, new practices, and current or up-coming large-scale projects.

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Internal communication forums may also include re-initiating the Leadership Academy in its entirety or specific courses from the Academy.

c. **Desired Outcomes**

- i. More effective meetings where decisions are made and then adhered to;
- ii. Empower employees to voice their praises and concerns regarding management, personnel issues, or projects;
- iii. Empower employees to consistently prepare for and participate in successful information forums. This will help them get the information they need for their projects, efficiently use time spent, and result in better communication among all participants; and
- iv. Develop protocols to ensure our communication is effective with the public.

d. **Underlying Contradictions**

If we are to communicate effectively with our public, we must first solidify our internal communication capabilities.

The underlying contradictions for this project are:

- i. Lack of communication among staff causes dissension and the spread of misinformation among staff and stakeholders;
- ii. Ineffective internal communication causes inconsistencies in the way we manage projects, interact with stakeholders, and implement policies;
- iii. Lack of involvement in decision making processes causes low morale, dissatisfaction, anonymity, and a disconnect between management and staff;
- iv. Ineffective communication with stakeholders can make us appear to be a bureaucracy rather than an agency that serves the public.

e. **Contribution to the Practical Vision**

Empowerment begins with communication. Strong internal communication benefits not only the relationship between management and employees, but also the relationship between the San Diego Water Board and its stakeholders. As a public agency, we must have the ability to effectively communicate with our peers and stakeholders. This is achieved by implementing a clear communication system.

f. **Schedule/Milestones**

- i. 3-6 months:
 - a. Develop a Supervisor survey;
 - b. Establish a workgroup for developing effective meeting protocols;
 - c. Establish an internal all-staff communication forum.

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- d. Establish a workgroup to develop consistent implementation policies, forms, letters, etc.
- ii. 6-9 months:
 - a. The workgroup will develop (1) meeting protocols for all employees to use, (2) a tentative schedule for internal presentations of information. The master template, guidelines for conducting effective meetings, and an inventory of the recommended meeting types and frequencies for recurring meetings will be made available on the share drive.
 - b. The second workgroup will begin developing templates for standard documents (i.e., NOVs, CAO, staff enforcement letters, etc.).
- iii. 12-18 months and on-going:
 - a. The workgroup will evaluate and update (as needed) the tools and guidelines for effective meetings, how well they work, and provide staff with any new or modified tools and guidelines.
 - b. The second workgroup, on an annual basis, will revisit standardized templates and update them as needed, providing staff with a copy of all new documents as needed.
- iv. Annually. Compile a list of topics that will be a part of our learning agenda for the coming year.

g. Resources Needed

There would some resources required to develop the guidelines and tools to be used for coordinating effective meetings. One or two line staff may need up to 20 hours to develop the protocols, guidelines, and schedule, and a few subsequent hours working with management to revise the protocols and guidelines. Similarly, at least 20 hours would likely be needed for staff or management to develop standard templates and implementation policies. The amount of time needed will depend on which templates and policies are being revisited and developed.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

Other priority work of the staff working on the meeting tools and guidelines would be delayed by two to three weeks.

3. Revitalizing the Employee Association

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project will revitalize the existing Employee Association to encourage more participation and increase the funds available for morale-boosting projects and activities.

b. Project Goals

This project will better define the functions carried out by the Employee Association and solicit more participation. The project will also investigate the feasibility of increasing the revenue generated by the Employee Association to fund the purchase and/or repair of lunchroom equipment, office parties, and employee recognition awards.

c. Desired Outcomes

i. More Participation

Recruitment of more people to participate in activities performed by the Employee Association will limit the time commitment by any one person. Increasing participation will also ensure there is a redundancy that is necessary for smooth operation of Employee Association duties as workloads and staffing fluctuates.

ii. Increase Revenue

Increasing revenue generated by the Employee Association will provide funding for creature comforts not paid for by the state, including but not limited to, the purchase and/or maintenance of lunchroom equipment, office parties, and employee recognition awards.

d. Underlying Contradictions

Revitalizing the Employee Association will enhance the San Diego Water Board community and engage staff to participate in that community. By encouraging more employees to participate in the various subcommittees of the Employee Association, we remove the burden from the few staff members that have been managing those duties and provide opportunities for those willing to broaden their leadership and community-building capabilities.

This project has the following underlying contradictions:

- i. Not all staff will be interested in participating in some or all of the Employee Association responsibilities or activities sponsored by the Employee Association;
- ii. Some of the Employee Association responsibilities will require staff to complete them during non-business hours; and
- iii. Staff that do not want to participate in the responsibilities associated with or activities sponsored by the Employee Association will be expected to cover essential office functions so staff responsible for those functions can participate.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

Revitalizing the Employee Association will provide a mechanism to enhance the community culture of the agency by creating a funding source for morale-

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boosting activities. These endeavors will build camaraderie by providing stress reducing activities in which employees that normally do not work together can interact.

Providing creature comforts such as snacks, coffee, and opportunities to compost and recycle will create a comfortable work environment and funding for employee recognition awards.

f. **Schedule/Milestones**

i. 3-6 months:

Conduct a survey to determine the level of interest in revitalizing and participating in the Employee Association. Follow up with a meeting with interested staff and form committees such as:

- a. Dues collection.
- b. Snack boxes: shopping, stocking, collecting money, re-pricing.
- c. Recycling: what, how often, where.
- d. Coffee funds.
- e. Book Club.
- f. Fun stuff: luncheons, parties.
- g. Office Beautification.

ii. 6-9 months:

At an all staff meeting request volunteers for a new Employee Association Committee. At the first meeting of the Committee, establish subcommittees to take control of the following: snacks, coffee, and lending library; recycling; luncheons and parties; and office beautification.

iii. 12 months and quarterly thereafter:

The Employee Association committee will provide information at an all-staff meeting regarding how much money has been received, how much was spent, and how much is available for upcoming office-wide events (party, barbeque, etc.), or for employee recognition.

g. **Resources Needed**

Many volunteers would reduce the amount of work time that would be spent by each person.

h. **Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project**

It is not anticipated that any other tasks will not be accomplished in order to complete this project.

4. Unit Coverage Needs Assessment

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project provides an opportunity to reevaluate staff coverage needs on a unit-by-unit, branch-by-branch basis, eliminating the necessity of office wide core hours. By reevaluating our office staffing needs in this manner, the agency will benefit from more efficient and effective coverage and higher employee morale, by allowing more opportunities for alternate work schedules. The level of flexibility allowed will be dependent upon an individual's proven ability to work independently with a high level of productivity.

b. Project Goals

This project will assess the office coverage needs on a unit-by-unit basis, and contemplate the elimination of office-wide core hours. By implementing unit specific staff coverage requirement, it may allow more staff the opportunity to work alternate schedules, while maintaining a high level of productivity and customer service.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Determine an appropriate level of office coverage for each unit during regular business hours;
- ii. Provide an incentive for employees to achieve a high level of productivity in order to keep or obtain their desired work schedule; and
- iii. Increase morale by allowing staff more flexible work schedules.

d. Underlying Contradictions

Staff members who demonstrate responsibility and reliability deserve the opportunity to adjust their current work schedule to create the best possible work-life balance. This project also provides an incentive to increase productivity, and superior accomplishment in order to justify schedule changes.

This project has the following underlying contradictions:

- i. Staff that do not exhibit the values associated with this project will not be eligible to change their current work schedule;
- ii. Supervisors may be required to address persistent performance problems;
- iii. Our mission may periodically require the temporary suspension of alternate work schedules; or
- iv. Some units may require a bigger presence in the office on a consistent basis, which in turn may not allow these employees the same level of flexibility that other units are afforded.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

The Schedule Realignment project develops an internal practice that uses schedule realignment to reward high-performing employees with flexibility in their work schedule. For many, this flexibility supports a balance between the commitments in their professional and personal lives, resulting in higher morale and better job performance.

f. Schedule/Milestones

i. 3-6 months:

Each unit will meet and determine daily staffing requirements.

Branches will meet to review and adjust unit coverage if necessary in an open forum where a group decision will be made.

Staff eligible for schedule realignment will be identified.

Staff not eligible for schedule realignment, that would like to participate, will meet with the unit supervisor to identify improvements needed to become eligible.

ii. 6-9 months:

New schedules will be implemented.

Ineligible staff will meet with supervisors to determine if adequate improvements have been attained to warrant participation in the program.

iii. 12 months:

Review unit coverage to determine if adjustment should be made based on past 12 months. Adjust unit coverage as needed, upon approval, and realign schedules if necessary.

g. Resources Needed

There are no additional resources needed to complete this project.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

There are no other tasks that might not get accomplished by completing this project.

5. Acknowledgement and Recognition

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project will develop a platform by which staff can identify how they would like to be acknowledged for exceptional work performance. Acknowledging and recognizing accomplishments is a powerful form of communicating that an employee is valued as a member of the San Diego Water Board. Recognizing accomplishments and acknowledging efforts promotes a positive outlook and renews energy. Employees who feel appreciated often go above and beyond

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what is expected of them, are more productive, motivated, and likely to find long-lasting job satisfaction.

b. **Project Goals**

Establish a system for acknowledging employees' efforts and recognizing a job well done. The SEEC team endeavors to create a community in which the practice of acknowledgement is part of the Water Board culture.

c. **Desired Outcomes**

- i. Acknowledge effort;
- ii. Recognize accomplishment; and
- iii. Reward achievement.

d. **Underlying Contradictions**

Employees who are recognized for their commitment and dedication will feel valued and respected. These employees enhance the overall integrity of the San Diego Water Board community.

The underlying contradictions associated with this project include:

- i. Time and cost of implementing a program and training people how to give recognition;
- ii. Time taken to give recognition;
- iii. Dollar cost of recognition items given;
- iv. There is a risk that the reward program itself could become a disincentive, particularly if staff start taking the rewards for granted or if the rewards are given in a gratuitous or off-handed manner; or
- v. Some staff may become resentful if the same people are being recognized and/or rewarded repeatedly.

e. **Contribution to our Practical Vision**

It is our vision to create and sustain an office culture with employees who feel valued, who are motivated to produce high-quality work, and who feel their work is relevant to the San Diego Water Board's overall mission. Recognizing extraordinary performance and accomplishments renews a staff's energy and sustains their motivation to continue doing more than what is minimally expected of them. Creating a culture of empowered and energized staff will facilitate accomplishing the goals defined throughout our Practical Vision.

f. Milestones

i. 3 – 6 months:

The members of each unit will need to develop a list of ideas for the types of rewards that are meaningful to them. These lists could be incorporated into an Employee Survey, where each unit, branch, or the agency as a whole could rank the types of rewards that may be used when recognizing the contributions of staff.

ii. 6 – 9 months:

Establish a planning group consisting of a cross-section of line employees, senior staff, and branch chiefs to determine what accomplishments will be formally recognized, how often recognition will occur, and what will be provided as a token of appreciation.

iii. 9 – 12 months:

Communicate the formal recognition program to all managers and staff.

g. Resources Needed

Recognition is not a one-size-fits-all. Thought needs to go into what would be appreciated by the person being recognized. Some of the funds appropriated through the Employee Association may be used to recognize superior staff performance.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

Acknowledgment and recognition can be formal or informal. Formal recognition initiatives can be implemented on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis, while informal recognition can take place when it is merited.

The time it takes to say “thank you” is negligible, and it only takes slightly longer to handwrite a note thanking an employee for a specific effort or project. More public acknowledgment can be done during unit or all staff meetings. Thus, this effort should not interfere with other projects.

There should be no tasks that will not be done in order to do this project.

6. New Employee Orientation and Training

a. Project Description

This project will develop an organized, consistent, comprehensive orientation and training process for new employees. A new employee’s first week on the job is the Water Board’s only opportunity to make a good first impression and give the new employee a positive feeling about the Water Board. However, the process takes much longer than just one week. It is essential that new employees are not only provided with an orientation to the office culture, but also that he/she is thoroughly trained in his/her new duties, and that he/she knows who to ask should he/she have questions.

b. Project Goals

The Orientation and Training Program will develop a process to integrate new employees into the San Diego Water Board community, and familiarize them with the San Diego Water Board's mission and his/her specific responsibilities.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Ensure that new employees feel welcome, comfortable, prepared, and supported to reduce the amount of time needed to integrate into the San Diego Water Board community; and
- ii. Provide peer mentoring to orient new staff into a specific program area, provide them on-the-job-training, and an introduction to the Mission of the San Diego Water Board.

d. Underlying Contradictions

Orientation is an ongoing process, not just a one-day program. The Water Board has an obligation to assist new employees to adapt to the new situation and feel as comfortable as possible, and the time and effort invested in the beginning will pay dividends for years to come.

The underlying contradictions of this project are:

- i. A considerable amount of time may be needed to mentor a new employee depending on the program they are hired into; or
- ii. Because of existing workloads, it may be difficult for some staff to allocate time to mentor a new employee.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

This orientation and training program is the first opportunity the San Diego Water Board has to share its practical vision. An organized orientation and training program acquaints new employees with policies and procedures, provides an overview of the San Diego Water Board's mission, and welcomes them as members of the Water Board community.

f. Milestones

- i. 0 – 3 Months:
Create new employee orientation handbook and send it to senior management for review and approval.
- ii. 3 – 6 Months:
Make any necessary revisions and circulate to staff.
- iii. 6 – 9 Months and thereafter:
Periodic review to make any changes or adjustments to the program.

g. Resources Needed

Staff time and effort.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

We do not anticipate other projects not being completed in order to meet the goals of this project.

7. Increased Cross-Training Opportunities

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project will provide cross-training opportunities to staff that are qualified for upward mobility or are interested in learning about other programs at the San Diego Water Board. This project is divided into three tiers, each of which requires a different level of commitment and cross-training opportunity.

Tier I. Tier I is intended to provide cross training opportunities that assist staff in their job performance and overall knowledge and understanding of the San Diego Water Board’s mission. By conducting joint inspections or site visits, participating in stakeholder meetings, or meeting one-on-one with staff from other programs, staff develop a better understanding of how different programs interact or impact one another. This type of interaction is similar to the internal mentoring program listed above, in that staff is encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise with other staff who are interested in expanding their knowledge of the internal workings of the San Diego Water Board. In turn, staff will be better equipped to deal with facets of their job that are less familiar and outside the normal scope of their work.

Tier II. Tier II is specifically intended to provide staff who are considering an intra-office rotation the opportunity to learn about a program of interest prior to a potential rotation. This level of cross training may also be used by staff who want to gain a more in-depth understanding of another program area within the San Diego Water Board, but who are not necessarily looking to rotate in the near future. In Tier II cross training, staff act as “support staff” on large-scale projects within the program of interest. In completing this type of cross-training, staff will acquire knowledge, skills, and experience in other program areas.

Tier III. Tier III is designed to provide staff the opportunity to cross-train in multiple program areas. Similar to the Tier II cross-training approach, staff would act as support staff in a program of interest over a period of time before moving on to work with another program. This Tier would be ideal for staff interested in preparing to seek a supervisory position in a unit not familiar to them, or for the current supervisory seeking to pursue a branch manager position.

b. Project Goals

Assist staff in obtaining their career goals, staff and the opportunity to obtain a clear understanding of the roles of other programs in the San Diego Water Board.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Provide an understanding of what others in the office community are doing, an opportunity to cross train and learn another program area without formally rotating into that program, and allows staff to fill more roles and participate in projects normally outside their program areas; and
- ii. Increase in morale of participants. Morale will increase as staff members get to participate in cross-training opportunities. This will give staff the opportunity to share their knowledge with others and to try something new;

d. Underlying Contradictions

Providing multiple levels of cross-training allows staff to choose the Tier that best fits their current work load and desire or need for broader information. Cross-training supports staff who are interested in future rotations, upward mobility, or who want to enhance their job performance. Cross-training also empowers staff by affording them the information and resources needed to improve the quality of their work. Cross-training improves productivity and increases staff commitment and motivation, as well as increasing staff's knowledge and ability to perform different tasks or learn new skills. It can add variety to staff's work days, add new challenges to their jobs, and/or allow staff to try out new skills for future career development.

The underlying contradictions associated with the project include:

- i. The limited availability of staff to participate due to funding or workload constraints;
- ii. Staff may not care to participate in mentoring or sharing information with others; or
- iii. There may not be projects suitable for Tier II or III cross-training candidates to participate in on a regular basis.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

Providing the opportunity to cross-train will increase staff's understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other staff. This project seeks to bridge a long standing gap between staff of different technical backgrounds and job duties. The opportunity to increase skills, knowledge, experience, and adding new challenges to their jobs boosts productivity, improves motivation and commitment, and adds diversity to staff's workloads.

f. Schedule/Milestones

- i. Identify desire for cross-training in Individual Development Plans.
- ii. Determination of candidates, tiers, and cross-training logistics by supervisors and branch chiefs, and the assistant executive officer.
- iii. Development cross training criteria for Tiers II and III.
- iv. Establish a schedule for cross-training.

g. Resources Needed

Staff will need task codes to which charge their time.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

It is not anticipated that any tasks would not be completed in order to meet this task. However, some tasks may require a longer time interval to be complete, depending on the level of cross-training occurring. Typically, the cross-training would take place in short intervals, spaced out throughout the year, and only at the discretion of staff and their supervisors.

8. Internal Mentoring Program

a. Project Description or Purpose

The purpose of the program is to provide employees with the benefit of learning from the experience and knowledge of other seasoned employees. Peer mentoring can be helpful to employees who are preparing for their licensing exams, senior exams, interviews for upward mobility, or are considering an internal rotation into a new program area. Mentoring may also be a useful tool in the orientation of employees who are new to the San Diego Water Board.

The San Diego Water Board is fortunate to have employees who bring an abundance of knowledge and expertise to our agency. We need to utilize this resource by establishing an internal mentoring program. This program could also be used to garner information from long-time staff that have an expertise that no one else has, so we are prepared when the long-time staffer retires.

Students are often underutilized at the San Diego Water Board. Typically our students process incoming reports, or update and maintain databases. While this is helpful to staff, our students don't always get a lot of hands-on training. The internal mentoring program could be used to develop a work-experience curriculum for our student interns, providing them with hands-on environmental regulatory experience.

This project will offer staff seeking licensure, promotion, or upward mobility the benefit of learning from the experience and knowledge of the San Diego Water Board community. It will also afford students with the resources needed to complete senior projects and training that will benefit them when they enter the work force upon graduation. The mentoring program also provides a forum to

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pass on specialized information learned by long-time staff prior to separation from state service.

b. Project Goals

This project will lead to successful passing of licensing exams, assist students in completing their education requirements, and document specialized information.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. IDP Goals. Individual development plans would include tasks the employee should complete within the coming year to in preparation for the licensing exam, and a timeframe within which to achieve their license;
- ii. Increase staff's likelihood of promotions and/or passing the licensing exams;
- iii. Each San Diego Water Board student has a clear understanding of staff's expectations, they have the resources they need to perform their job, and they obtain real, on-the-job training; and
- iv. Pass on expert information from staff that are getting close to retirement so that knowledge and information isn't lost.

d. Underlying Contradictions

A mentoring program can build dedication and loyalty in staff and students, who would appreciate the Water Board's commitment to their learning process, as well as mentors, who would gain a sense of pride and ownership in contributing to the Water Board's future.

The underlying contradiction of this project is as follows:

- i. Not all staff will want or have time to participate in the mentoring program;
- ii. Many staff will not have time to mentor our students; or
- iii. Staff close to retirement may not document or share their wealth of knowledge or pass it on to other staff before they leave, and that valuable resource will be lost.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

One focus of the SEEC Practical Vision is to support and empower staff. By assisting staff in their preparation for licensing examinations we support their efforts in obtaining a professional license. This mentoring project also seeks to support student interns in their efforts to complete their senior projects by using the training and experience gained through work in the San Diego Water Board's programs and business services unit. The experience and knowledge gained through this mentorship program will support employees to achieve upward mobility, and empower student interns as they transition into the full-time work force.

f. Schedule/Milestones

- i. Establish the licensing mentoring groups for geologists and engineers.
- ii. Establish a schedule for mentoring sessions based on the next exam date.
- iii. Determine the topics for mentoring/study sessions.
- iv. Establish a student curriculum committee.
- v. Develop a curriculum for training students.
- vi. Appoint a mentor for each student to answer questions and guide them through their projects.
- vii. Develop a list of projects that students can work on.
- viii. Develop of list of topics that need to be shared among other staff in anticipation of upcoming retirements.

g. Resources Needed

Staff's individual allotment of training hours or dollars may be used to support this goal. Mentors could also organize lunchtime review sessions, or suggested reading or exercises for staff to complete on their own time in preparation for the mentoring sessions and licensing exams.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

We do not anticipate that any other projects will not be completed in order to meet the goals of this project.

9. Watershed Display Boards

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project installs nine watershed LED display boards on the wall in the most traveled office corridor. Each display board will contain the name of one of the nine watersheds we manage. These boards will include a list of the more significant projects currently being worked on within each of the program units. Project information posted on a watershed display board will be brief and include the project title and staff initials as contact(s). Projects affecting multiple watersheds will appear on multiple watershed display boards.

b. Project Goals

The Watershed Display Boards will improve daily project decision making by increasing inter-program communication.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Increase communication among San Diego Water Board staff on active projects in each unit, within each watershed;

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- ii. Increase effectiveness of regulatory actions;
- iii. Increase efficiency of regulatory actions;
- iv. Reduce duplication of efforts on projects;
- v. Inform San Diego Water Board staff on watershed-specific and multi-watershed projects; and
- vi. Increase awareness of “highest priority” developing projects within our region.

d. Underlying Contradictions

The Watershed Display Boards are an innovative way to communicate information about ongoing projects in each watershed in order to affect staff decisions about their own projects.

This project has the following underlying contradictions:

- i. Some staff may not see the communication value of the boards;
- ii. Some programs may not consistently update their boards;
- iii. Staff will not always consult the boards prior to making project decisions; or Time spent communicating with other staff is time not spent on writing permits, reviewing reports, providing written comments, or reviewing applications.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision

Installation of nine LED watershed display boards will create constant real time communication of specific project actions occurring in one or more watersheds office wide. Frequent viewing of these watershed display boards will inform staff, at a glance, of other regulatory actions occurring in the same watershed as their project which may affect their future regulatory decisions. This, in conjunction with other staff actions, will allow us to accomplish our goals as an agency more efficiently. Upon completion of this project we will have increased the flow of communication among staff via LED watershed display boards.

f. Schedule/Milestones

- i. 0-3 months:
Create a Watershed Display Board Workgroup. Complete research on LED display boards and costs.
- ii. 3-6 months:
Purchase LED display boards (based on available funding). Install LED display boards within two weeks of purchase.

g. Resources Needed

- i. Approximately three hours of staff time for two staff to research display board models, cost compare, contact vendors and perhaps drive to purchase boards.
- ii. Estimated \$1400 (approximately \$150 per board plus supplies to hang them).
- iii. Up to several days of time necessary to install the wiring necessary for the LED boards to function.
- iv. Approximately two hours of staff time for two staff to hang the boards on the wall.
- v. Approximately eight hours needed by IT staff to upload software and connect the LED boards to our servers.
- vi. Approximately one hour of staff time per program, per month, to keep the display boards current.

h. Tasks that might not be done in order to do this project

Five hours of regularly expected job duties for two staff will not be completed in order for staff to research, cost compare, shop, purchase, and install the LED display boards.

10. Employee Survey

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project is to use surveys to get staff feedback on timely issues within the office. This project will provide a mechanism to gather information, assess needs, and report outcomes of the survey.

b. Project Goals

Employee surveys will provide a forum for staff to propose ideas, comments, or concerns to management.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Assess staff's ideas on timely issues within the office;
- ii. Inform management through real time communication of staff ideas on timely issues within the office;
- iii. Consider staff's ideas during management decisions of timely issues within the office;
- iv. Report management decisions that result from a survey using a transparent process; and
- v. Allows difficult subjects to be raised or discussed in an anonymous manner.

d. Underlying Contradictions

Employee surveys provide a voice for staff to provide input on issues such as schedule realignments, staff recognition and accountability, necessary features at a new office facility, and general employee satisfaction; the results of such surveys provide information to management regarding areas where action is needed.

The underlying contradictions associated with this project include the following:

- i. Staff may use the surveys as an opportunity to vent rather than provide constructive feedback or ideas;
- ii. There is a perception that surveys may generate more ritual complaint, rather than positive discussion;
- iii. Survey takers must be careful to ask questions in such a way to elicit usable information; and
- iv. Time spent to generate survey questions, distribute surveys to staff, and analyze survey data.

e. Contribution to our Practical Vision.

We seek to create an office culture that encourages a community approach to the challenges we face as an agency. The Employee Survey project provides a process by which management can solicit ideas from employees on topics of interest, and use those ideas to inform their decisions. This exchange of ideas promotes an office community founded on common ideas and principals.

f. Schedule or Milestones

- i. Conduct an Employee Association Interest Survey – within the next 12 months.
- ii. Conduct Program Unit Specific Employee Survey – within the next 12 months.
- iii. Conduct an Office Move Survey – within 6 to 9 months prior to the move.
- iv. Conduct Employee Surveys to inform unit scale and office scale decisions on timely issues – As needed.

g. Resources Needed per Survey

- i. 3-6 Staff hours to develop survey;
- ii. One Executive Management hour to review and authorize survey;
- iii. 10 minutes to complete the survey;
- iv. 5-10 Staff hours to collect, organize and report out survey data;

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- v. Alternative Option - UCSD Social Science Senior Students to develop surveys as part of their senior projects – potential savings in 10 staff hours mentioned above; and
 - vi. Executive Management report on how survey was used to support decision on timely issues within the office.
- h. What tasks might not be done in order to do this project?**
- Twenty hours of regularly expected job duties will not get done in order for two staff (total of twenty hours) to develop, conduct, collect, and report out on each survey.

Conclusions

An organizational culture that places a high emphasis on the well-being of its employees will be rewarded with a harmonious work environment founded on the principals and values of the organization. This type of organizational culture promotes mutual respect, appreciation of effort, open communication, and dedication to the Mission of the San Diego Water Board. In turn, the retention of quality employees increases, the work product advances, and morale improves, which is beneficial to the individual employees, the agency as a whole, and the public at large.

A Success Story...

Supportive management and empowered staff members can work together to meet and overcome challenges creatively and flexibly, as demonstrated below:

Recently, a valued staff member needed to take several weeks off of work in order to ensure the proper recovery of a family member from major surgery. The employee had two choices – take a leave of absence, or work from home for the extended period of time. Having enough vacation time wasn't an issue, but the thought of burdening coworkers with an increased workload, or leaving work sitting on her desk stagnate for several weeks created a dilemma for this employee. Because the staff member had a history of consistently producing high quality work, the supervisor agreed to allow her to work from home for the necessary period of time. In exchange for this flexibility, the employee agreed to take on the most undesirable tasks her unit handled in the following months, and exceeded her supervisor's expectations as far as quality and quantity of work produced during both periods.

This was a win-win situation for the supervisor, the staff member, and the unit as a whole. The staff member had the peace of mind she needed to oversee her loved one's recovery, while the agency's work did not suffer any delay or a decrease in quality. Management's approach to this situation is an example how supporting staff in maintaining a healthy balance between their professional life and personal commitments, and empowering staff by offering flexibility and creative solutions to life's challenges, results in a "win" for everyone.

A Successfully Completed Project...

Office Move Steering Committee

An Office Move Steering Committee consisting of approximately 12 line staff, two Branch Chiefs, and the Assistant Executive Officer was formed in October 2012, roughly a year prior to the planned relocation. Over the course of the next 10 months, during monthly "cleanup days," this Steering Committee coordinated and oversaw activities ranging from discarding outdated equipment to organizing common spaces in preparation for moving to a new location on September 30, 2013. Due largely to the efforts of the Steering Committee, the move not only went relatively smoothly, but also generated a sense of community effort and camaraderie.

